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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7749
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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: CARE INTERNATIONAL LOCAL EMPLOYEE
ABDUCTED

REF: COLOMBO 177

1. (SBU) On February 26, the Country Director of CARE International in Sri Lanka (headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia) contacted Ambassador about the abduction of a CARE International staff member from a police checkpoint in Colombo on the evening of February 25. Three of CARE's staff from Ampara and Jaffna, in Colombo for a workshop, were returning to the Sapphire Hotel from a nearby restaurant. They were stopped by men in police uniforms who asked to see their national identity cards. One of the staff members, Mr. Athavan Thangaraya, was moved towards the curb, at which point a white van stopped and Mr. Thangaraya was forcibly pushed inside. The van then sped off to the south. The other two staff members did not get the license plate number of the vehicle, but did provide statements at a local police station. The senior officer on duty at the station said that the information on the abducted staff member would be circulated to all local police stations. The CARE International Country Director sent letters to two Deputy Inspector Generals of Police in Colombo, Nimal Mediwaka and D.W. Prathapasinghe.

2. (SBU) After consulting with Osborne, Ambassador immediately sent a letter to Inspector General of Police Victor Perera, with copies to Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa and Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe. Ambassador informed IGP Perera of the incident, stressed the urgency of locating the employee, and requested information about any developments in the case. Ambassador also called the Defense Secretary to underline our interest in a speedy, favorable

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resolution. Rajapaksa was not aware of the incident but promised to look into the matter right away. Embassy will continue to monitor the situation closely.

BLAKE